

The MAN of the Hour

HONOLULU
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BY
**ALBERT
PAYSON
TERHUNE**
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GEORGE H. BROADHURST

CHAPTER VII.—CONTINUED
(From Last Saturday)

"They've got to be seen to be understood. A thousand poor tired wives in white faced, spindly kids turned out into the country for the only glimpse of green grass and shady trees they ever get all year. A thousand mothers and children out in a cool grove with nothing to do but roll around the soft grass and play and eat all the fancy grub they can hold. Maybe, miss, it wouldn't mean a lot to



"I had a surprise for you, Alwyn," interrupted his mother.

you, but if you'd been workin' an' livin' an' sleepin' an' starvin' for twelve months in a stuffy, dark, smelly back tenement room, tiffin' like a slave to keep food an' clothes between the kids an' starvation, an' was barely able to keep body an' soul together—well, maybe then you'd understand what them outings an' turkey feasts an' loads of coal means to the poor. And they won't turn down Jimmy Phelan at Horrihan's orders."

"I do understand," cried Dallas, her big eyes bright with tears. "I understand, and, in behalf of all women and children, I thank you with my whole heart!"

"You're all right, miss," muttered the delighted, embarrassed Phelan, at once at a loss for words. "You're—you're all right! I'll leave it to his honor if—"

"Indeed she is!" broke in a suave voice at whose sound the little spell of sentiment was broken and which caused Phelan and Bennett to turn in annoyance toward the door.

Scott Gibbs, bland, well-groomed, quite ignoring the other men's lack of welcome, stood bowing on the threshold.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Alwyn," whispered Mrs. Bennett in a hurried aside to her son as the latter summoned up sufficient civility to greet the newcomer. "I forgot to tell you. Mr. Gibbs was calling on Dallas when I stopped for her, and he asked leave to come along. I'm sorry, but—"

"How are you, Bennett?" Gibbs was saying. "And—Mr. Phelan, too, isn't it? Alwyn, I'm glad to see you again. You remember me? Scott Gibbs? I met—"

"Yes," said Phelan. "I remember you, all right. You was up to Wainwright's last summer—that day me an' Horrihan sent the drive of peace cerechins' up a tree. I didn't know you visited the city hall too."

"I came here as a rule," answered Gibbs. "I came here with Mrs. Bennett and Miss Wainwright. I wanted a glimpse of the man who can make one pen stroke that will send Borough Street railway stock up to 100 or down to 10."

"Do you mean," broke in Dallas, "that Mr. Bennett can really have such an effect on the stock market?"

"That and more," Gibbs assured her. "Why, the mere rumor that he meant to veto the Borough's franchise bill has sent the stock tumbling eight points since the market opened today."

"What power for one man!" exclaimed the girl, turning to Bennett in surprise. "And are you going to veto it?"

"Office secrets," reproved Alwyn jestingly. "Hands off!"

"Veto it?" echoed Gibbs, with a laugh. "Of course he isn't. It would

be too hard upon his friends—unfair and unkind, to say the least."

"But why?" queried Dallas, forestalling Alwyn, who was about to speak. "Because," cut in Gibbs before Bennett could interfere, "the men who are backing the Borough bill are the men who made him in mayor. It wouldn't be square for him to turn his new power against the very men who gave him that power. Now, would it?"

"By the men who are backing the bill whom do you mean?" asked Bennett.

"Oh, I just spoke in generalities. As a matter of fact, the break in the price today was lucky for three who wanted a buy."

"An' your firm's doin' most of the buyin', I'm told," interpolated Phelan. "We have a great deal of the stock, admit," said Gibbs. "So you see, Bennett, you can make me or break me. I face myself in your hands."

"I see you are taking a most unfair advantage of me, Mr. Gibbs," retorted Alwyn, with some heat. "You have no right to thrust this information on me and to appeal—"

"But I was only—"

"You were trying to influence my action toward the Borough bill. You cannot do it."

"Why, I didn't think you'd be angry."

"I'm not. Let's drop the subject, please."

"I only answered Miss Wainwright's questions, I'm—"

"We'll leave Miss Wainwright's name out of the matter, please," replied Bennett.

"Certainly, if you like," assented Gibbs, with a shrug of his broad shoulders. "I am afraid my time is up. Good day, Bennett. I'm sorry you mis-"

"I didn't. Good day."

"I'll be on my way, too," announced Phelan, breaking the awkward pause that followed Gibbs' exit. "Ladies, I'm proud to have met you. If either of you knows a poor woman needing a turkey or a family wanting an outing, just drop me a line, and I'll see they get it. And they needn't come from my ward neither."

"That's had politics, alderman?" laughed Bennett.

"It's good humanity, though. There's two things I love to do—first, to down the man who's my enemy, an', second, to give good times to folks who's strangers to fun. Goodbye, your honor. I'll see you ag'in now I've found my way, adieu."

"Alwyn," said Mrs. Bennett as the alderman bowed himself out with many flourishes, "I want to see Cynthia. Can I go into her office now, or is she too busy? I'll be back in a few minutes, Dallas, and bring her with me. I know how anxious she is to see you again."

"I wonder what Phelan would think of that for 'raw' work," thought Alwyn as the old lady bustled into the inner room, leaving Dallas and himself alone. Perhaps Dallas, too, understood, for her manner was less assured than usual as her eyes met his.

"It is so good—so good to see you again," he said. "It seems years instead of months since you went away."

"But how splendidly you've filled the time! And what a magnificent fight you made! I was so proud of you, Alwyn!"

"Really? I remember you once said I was a mere idler—a rich man's son—and that you weren't at all proud of me."

"That is past. We must forget it. You are awake now."

"Forget it? Not for worlds. I owe all my success to you, Dallas. It was your face that strengthened me when there seemed no hope. It was the memory of your words that kept me brave and made me resolve to win against all odds. You were my inspiration, the light in my darkness. At each step I thought 'Dallas would be glad' or 'Dallas would not approve of this.' And I steered my course accordingly to victory."

"No, no," murmured the girl. "It was your own courage, your strength—"

"Not mine. It was your faith in me. Do you know, I think no man ever accomplishes anything by himself. There is always a woman, I think, behind every great achievement. The world at large does not see her—does not know of her existence—but she's in the heart of the man who is making the fight. He battles in her name as did the knights of old, and the triumph is hers, not his. Whether his reward is the crown of love or the crown of thorns, she is the inspiration."

"Then if I had a share in your success I am very happy, Alwyn, for your name is in every mouth. You are the man of the hour, even as you were in the olden days on the football field. Oh, I am proud of you—very, very proud! There is a glorious future before you."

"That all rests in your dear hands," cried Alwyn.

"Future or present, Dallas, it's all the same. If only you—"

"Say, Bennett," cried a deep voice

"The Weekly Edition of the Evening Bulletin gives a complete summary of the news of the day."

as the door from the outer office was banged open and Horrihan, red faced and angry, burst in. "I understand that you've— Oh, I didn't know you had a lady calling on you," he broke off.

"Well, I have," retorted Bennett, furious at the untimely intrusion. "Ingram should have told you that at the door."

"I don't stop to hear what folks tell me at doors. I'll wait outside till you're alone."

"Don't trouble to wait. Goodbye."

"You can bet I'll trouble to wait," snarled Horrihan. "There's something you and I have got to settle today. Understand? I'll be outside. Don't keep me waiting long!"

"What a strange man!" exclaimed Dallas Wainwright in wonder, as the outer door slammed behind the boss. "And what utterly abominable manners! Who is he, Alwyn?"

"Richard Horrihan, the—"

"The boss. Yes. He has a pleasing way of stamping into the office unasked, as if he owned it and as if I were his clerk. But today's behavior was the worst yet. It's got to stop!"

"But don't do or say anything reckless, Alwyn. Promise me. Remember how strong he is!"

"There's no danger of his letting me forget his power," said Bennett, with a bitter smile. "He—"

"But you'll be careful, won't you? Please do, for my sake. And you needn't keep him waiting. If there's a way out through Cynthia's office we'll go by that. Goodbye. I'll explain to your mother. No, you must let us go now. Office business must come first. Won't you call this evening? I'll be home and alone."

Despite Bennett's remonstrances she was firm, and it was in no pleasant frame of mind that the mayor threw himself into a seat when he was left alone in the room. That the talk with Dallas, which had promised so much for him, should be thus rudely interrupted. That— Horrihan swung open the door and stamped in. The boss' finger held by no means subsided in the few moments of delay, but hid, rather, grown until it vibrated in his every word and gesture. He wasted no time in formalities, but came to the point with all the tender grace and tact of a pile driver.

"Look here, Bennett," he rumbled, menace underlying tone and look. "I'm told Phelan's been here this afternoon. What did he want?"

"To see me," answered Bennett calmly, the effort at self control visible only in the whitening of the knuckles that gripped the desk edge.

"What did he want to see you about?"

"A business matter."

"What business matter?"

"Mine."

"Yours, eh?" sneered Horrihan. "Well, young man, I want you to understand here and now that no one can be clumsy with Jim Phelan and my man at the same time. Got that through your head?"

"Yes," assented Bennett. "I think I have. And while we're speaking plainly I want you to understand here and now that no one can bully me, either here or elsewhere, and that I'm no man's man. Have you got that through your head?"

Horrihan stared in savage amazement. He doubted if his ears had not played him false. Bennett had always treated the boss with uniform courtesy, and Horrihan belonged to the too numerous class who do not understand until too late the difference between gentle breeding and weak cowardice. That a man should speak to him courteously and not laterlard his talk with oaths, obscenity or roughness seemed to Horrihan, as it does to many another boor, an evidence of timidity and lack of virility. A Damascus blade is a far more harmless looking weapon than a bludgeon, yet it is capable when the necessity arises of far deadlier work.

It is only the man whose gentleness has not granite strength as its foundation who deserves the newly popular term of "mollycoddle."

Had Horrihan's large experience with men been extended to embrace this fact he would probably never have picked out Alwyn Bennett in the first place as candidate for mayor nor deemed the younger man a fit tool for the organization's crooked work. The French nobles of the old regime, whose polish of manner was the envy of the world, fought like devils on occasion and went to death on the scaffold with a smile and a jest on their lips, while many a brutal demagogue in the same circumstances broke down and screamed for mercy. However, Horrihan

chanced to be more familiar with the history of the organization than with that of France; hence, deeming Ben-

nett's reply a mere sporadic flash of defiance from a properly cowed spirit, he resolved to crush the rebellion at a blow.

"Don't give me any insolence!" he roared. "I won't stand for it, and—"

"Moreover," quietly continued Bennett, as though the boss had not spoken, "I shall be very much obliged if in future you will knock at my door instead of bursting in on me. This is my private office, not yours."

"Do you mean to—"

"I've explained as clearly as I can just what I mean. If you don't understand me I can't supply you with intelligence."

"Bennett," said the boss, his burning rage steadied down to a white heat, far more dangerous, but less incoherent, "you and me are talking too much and saying too little. We've got to come to a showdown. You're a clever boy and you made a rattling good fight, and you're on the right side of the public and of the press too. You're the best material we've got, and if you try and do the right thing there's no limit to what you can rise to—but only if you do the right thing."

"The right thing," echoed Bennett. "What do you mean by the right thing?"

"I mean you've got to do the right thing by the men who put you where you are today."

"That's fair. But who put me where I am today?"

"I did—I, Dick Horrihan. Who ever heard of you till I took you up? Nobody. If I didn't make you mayor, who did, I'd like to know?"

"The voters. The people of this city."

"The voters," sneered Horrihan. "The voters did! Who had you nominated?"

"You did. But it was the public who elected me, and I'm going to obey your orders in one thing. I'm going to do the right thing by the men who put me where I am today."

"I'm going to pay the voters for their trust in me by giving them a fair and square administration. In the case of this Borough Street railway franchise bill, for instance, I'm going to do the right thing by the voters."

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whatever motive power they choose to. It gives them the right to charge five cent fares without any transfers. In one paragraph there's a clause permitting them to build a subway if they want one. By another paragraph's concessions they can build a conduit and lease it out for telephone or telegraph wires. By another they can do an express business. But all these provisions are as nothing compared to the fact that the bill gives the streets above and below ground to the Borough company forever and ever—not for a term of years, but until the end of the world. It delivers that route to the company not only for our time, but for always, and binds us and our descendants to its terms. That is the chief outrage of the whole thing. To think that the—"

"Oh, we've got a howling reformer in the mayor's seat, have we?" scoffed Horrihan. "If I'd known that—"

"The people have got a man who is trying to protect their rights and property. Here's a letter I received today. You'll recognize the name of the capitalist who wrote it. You know he is honest as well as wise. This is his proposition: He will pay \$2,000,000 for that same franchise, give the city 10 percent of the gross receipts and turn over the whole plant to it at the end of fifty years. What do you think of that?"

"It's a fake."

"It is a bona fide offer. He volunteers to deposit \$1,000,000 to bind the bargain. Now, what I want to ask you, Mr. Horrihan, is this: If the franchise is worth \$2,000,000, why are you and your faction in the board of aldermen so anxious to give it away for nothing?"

"Look here!" blustered the boss. "I'm looking," returned Bennett. "I've been looking deeper into it than you realize. I asked you a question just now. I'll answer it myself in one word—'Graft.' That is why you want to give away a franchise that is worth \$2,000,000."

"Graft!" snorted Horrihan contemptuously. "The same old reformer howl! What's your idea of graft, anyway?"

"Graft is unearned increment. Money to which the recipient has no legal or moral right. That is—"

"So! Then show me the man who isn't a grafter! A lawyer shows his client how to evade the law, and he takes a fee for doing it. What's that but graft? A magazine takes pay for printing an advertisement its editors know is a fake. What's that? Graft! When a congressman votes for an appropriation because another congressman has agreed to vote for one of his, what's that? Graft! When a five thousand a year senator retires at the end of ten years worth a million, what's that? Graft! A police captain on \$2,750 a year buys yachts and country estates. Graft! How about the railroad president who gets stock free in a corporation that ships over his road, or the insurance man or banker who gives or takes fat loans on fancy securities and clears 1,000 per cent? Grafters, all of 'em! Grafters! Every one grafts who can or who isn't too stupid. Show me a man who doesn't graft and I'll show you a fool. Present company not excepted."

"That's where you're wrong," returned Alwyn, ignoring the slur and speaking with a judicial quiet oddly at contrast with the boss' vehemence. "The man who said 'Honesty is the best policy' knew what he was talking about. It pays best not only hereafter, but here as well. Why did Missouri choose Folk for governor? Because in spite of his faults he is honest. Why was La Follette sent to the senate from Wisconsin? Because, faults and all, he was honest. Why did the people of this country make Roosevelt their president? Were they blind to his faults and follies? No, but they knew he was honest! I am honest. This bill isn't. That is why I won't sign it."

"You won't, eh?" roared Horrihan. "Then veto it! Veto it if you dare! I'll not only smash your political career, but I'll pass the bill over your veto. That'll show you pretty well how you and me stand as to power in the city. I'll make you the laughingstock of the whole thing out of your hands and passing it in spite of you."

"I doubt it," answered Bennett, pale, but meeting coolly the fiery wrath in Horrihan's little red eyes. "I intend to fight your Borough bill in the aldermanic chamber and outside that council. To pass a bill over my veto you'll have to get a two-thirds majority. That means fourteen votes. You have only your 'solid thirteen.' And I'll make it my business to see you don't get a fourteenth vote."

"I'll look out for that, all right, all right."

"One thing more, Mr. Horrihan. I have reason to believe there is bribery in this matter. I'll ferret out the name of every man who gives or takes a bribe in connection with the Borough franchise bill, and I'll send every one of them to jail—not only the aldermen, but the capitalists who are behind the measure. Receiver and thief shall go to jail together."

"Is that so?" chuckled Horrihan. "Then, Mr. Reformer, let me tell you who is really behind this whole affair."

"The man you'll have to jail first of all, Mr. Charles Wainwright, uncle of the girl you're trying to marry."

He leaned back to note the effect of his revelation, but Bennett's face moved no muscle, gave no hint of what lay beneath.

"Besides," went on Horrihan, eager to press his advantage, "every cent of Miss Wainwright's fortune and of her brother's has been put by Wainwright into Borough stock. If the franchise is beaten, that stock will collapse and Miss Wainwright will be a pauper. You'll beggar the girl you're in love with and her young brother if you veto that bill. Now go ahead and do as you like."

"Now go ahead and do as you like," said Horrihan.

It was Horrihan's trump card, and he had played it well. White, silent, Bennett walked back to his desk. The fight seemed all knocked out of him. Heavily he moved, like a man overexhausted. Picking up a pen, he wrote rapidly, then cast aside the pen, crossed to the window and looked out into the snowy, crowded park.

"You've signed the bill?" cried Horrihan in delight.

"I've vetoed it," replied Bennett.

"CHAPTER VII.
THE boss is turned down."

This startling news flew lightning fast to every quarter of the organization and in its wake spread a trail of incredulous amazement. Every member, from alderman to "hooker," knew why Horrihan had made Bennett mayor. That the latter should turn against his benefactor seemed not only black ingratitude, but something akin to insanity, for it apparently spelled political suicide for the young man.

While neither of the disputants had repeated the details of the quarrel, yet those details with many another were already passing from mouth to mouth in the mysterious fashion whereby the closest kept secrets are divulged and enlarged on. In the financial world, too, the veto came as a bombshell. Borough Street railway stock fell with a thud that shook more than one colossal fortune. Bennett—central point of the whole upheaval—was the calmest man of all who were involved. He had chosen his course, and he was following it with a dogged quiet far more dangerous than any loud mouthed bluster. He had laid out a campaign, and that campaign he rigidly followed.

His first step was to send for Perry Wainwright early in the morning following the clash with Horrihan and, under strict pledge of secrecy, to explain the whole complicated affair to that very bewildered young man.

"You're all right, Alwyn! You're all the goods!" crowed Perry in genuine admiration. "But why didn't you backhew Horrihan and throw him downstairs?"

"I think I did," said Bennett dryly. "I think I'm still doing it. That's why I sent for you today."

"Want me to lick him for you?" asked Perry in delight. "He's a bit over my weight, but I wouldn't mind pasting—"

"No," interrupted Bennett, amused at the lad's vehemence. "I want you to play the melodramatic brother and protect your sister."

"Say," snorted Perry, all the lightness gone out of his manner and his young frame stiffening ominously. "You mean to say the cur is framing up any game on Dallas? I—"

"Sit down," ordered Alwyn, "and try to use what little human intelligence you may have. I've got to have your help, and what use are you when all you can think of is getting thrashed by somebody? Sit down now and listen to me."

Perry meekly obeyed the new note of command in his friend's voice, and Bennett resumed:

"Your uncle has tried to hamper me by putting all your fortune and Dallas' into Borough Street railway stock. The news of my veto will reach the exchange almost at once. That will cause a slump in Borough stock. If Horrihan fails to carry the bill through over my head—and he will fail if I can possibly block him—that will mean the practical collapse of the stock. It will mean that you and Dallas will be almost penniless."

"Well," suggested Perry cheerfully, "then you can marry Dallas, and little brother Perry can come and live with you. Don't worry, old chap. I—"

"Shut up, you young idiot, and sit down and listen! Here's a check; also a note of introduction to my broker. He's a close mouthed fellow, and he'll keep the secret. I want you to sell Borough stock short to the amount of—"